

REMARKS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection and the allowance of all claims now pending in the above-identified patent application (*i.e.*, Claims 13-21) are respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

At the outset, it should be recognized that the presently claimed invention provides and simple, and quite convenient, article for carrying items for, *e.g.*, baby maintenance equipment, such that the carried items are readily accessible whenever required.

More particularly, the present invention provides a mat, which may be in an “open” or “closed” orientation, which includes a surface having a removable fabric mat and a substantially elongate portion engagable with the removable fabric mat on the surface. Side storage portions are provided, which have pockets for storing items. The side storage portions, when the mat is in its open orientation, extend laterally from, and at least partially along, each length of the substantially elongate portion on opposing sides thereof, so that the mat has a substantially cruciform shape. The mat is foldable and is able to be fastened, via fastening means, in its closed orientation into a portable bag with items stored in the side storage portions being accessible by opening a top portion of the portable bag. Various means for carrying the mat may also be included.

As will be explained in greater detail hereinafter, nowhere in the prior art is such a novel and efficient mat, which is foldable into a portable bag and which includes side storage portions for various types of items, with the items stored in the side storage por-

tions being accessible by opening a top portion of the portable bag formed via folding the mat, either disclosed or suggested.

By the present amendments, Applicant has amended independent Claim 13 (and all remaining claims via dependency) to clarify the structure and shape of the presently claimed mat, which can be folded into a portable bag, and to further specify that “items stored in said side storage portions [of the portable bag are] accessible by opening a top portion of said portable bag.” Subject matter support for the amendment entered for Claim 13 may be found, *inter alia*, in Applicant’s *Specification* at Page 3, lines 1 – 4.

Applicant has also amended dependent Claim 15 to delete the phrase “open upper surface,” which the Examiner had considered indefinite and which formed the basis of the Examiner’s 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, indefiniteness rejection, and has substituted therefor the clarifying language “so that in this partially closed orientation, access is available to the items stored in said side storage portions.”

In light of the amendment entered for dependent Claim 15, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner’s indefiniteness rejection of Claims 15 and 16, as part of the first Office Action, has been overcome and should now be appropriately withdrawn.

Turning now, in detail, to an analysis of the Examiner’s prior art rejection of Applicant’s claims, in the first Office Action the Examiner had rejected independent Claim 13 (and various dependent claims) as being anticipated, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §102(b), by Lewis, U.S. Patent No. 5,481,767. It is the Examiner’s contention that Lewis

discloses a mat capable of being in both open and closed orientations, which includes a surface having a removable fabric mat, a substantially elongate portion engagable with the removable fabric mat, side storage portions having pockets for storing items, and with the mat being foldable, and able to be fastened via fastening means, thereby anticipating the claims enumerated in the Examiner's 35 U.S.C. §102(b) anticipation rejection.

In reply to the Examiner's anticipation rejection applying Lewis, the applied citation discloses a "multipurpose beach blanket," which may be folded into a wraparound support carrier that defines a storage member having a plurality of storage pockets, a handle and adjustable shoulder straps. (Lewis, *Abstract*) The wraparound blanket (10) and pillow (35), as best shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 (but which are also visible in the remaining drawing figures), unlike Applicant's presently claimed invention, would not appear to form "side storage portions . . . accessible by opening a top portion of said portable bag," as now recited in pending independent Claim 13 (and Claims 14-21 via dependency.)

The side sections of the "beach blanket," as taught by Lewis, again in contrast to the structure of the present invention, as now claimed, would not appear to disclose or suggest "side storage portions," with the article disclosed by Lewis seemingly being limited to a convenient means for transporting a beach blanket to, and from, a beach or other leisure location.

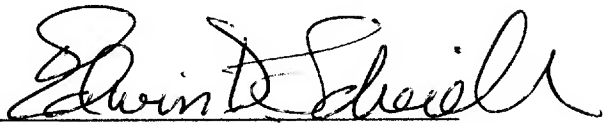
Because it is respectfully contended that the multipurpose beach blanket of Lewis neither discloses nor suggests a manner or capability of folding a mat into a "portable bag" that allows access to items stored in the side portions thereof by opening the top of

the bag, as folded, it is submitted that Lewis neither anticipates, nor renders obvious, the present invention, as now claimed. Withdrawal of the Examiner's 35 U.S.C. §102(b) anticipation rejection of the first Office Action is, therefore, respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully contended that all claims now pending in the above-identified patent application (*i.e.*, Claims 13-21) recite novel and efficient mat, which is foldable into a portable bag and which includes side storage portions for various types of items, such as baby care items, with the items stored in the side storage portions being accessible by opening a top portion of the portable bag formed via folding the mat, which is patentably distinguishable over the prior art. Accordingly, withdrawal of the outstanding rejection and the allowance of all claims now pending are now respectfully requested and earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enc.: 1. Petition for Three-Month Extension of Time for Response; and,
2. EFT for \$510.00 (Three-Month Extension Fee).

The Commissioner for Patents is hereby authorized to charge the Deposit Account of Applicant's Attorney (*Account No. 19-0450*) for any fees or costs pertaining to the prosecution of the above-identified patent application, but which have not otherwise been provided for.